

**STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE EDWARD J. MARKEY (D-MA)  
ON THE RELEASE OF THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT  
JULY 22, 2004**

The members and staff of the 9/11 Commission deserve our commendation and gratitude for the meticulous, thorough report that they have produced. Americans also owe a debt of gratitude to the families of the victims of the 9/11 attacks. Without their unwavering perseverance, this report would never have seen the light of day.

Despite repeated resistance from the Bush Administration – which initially opposed creation of the Commission, refused to supply witnesses such as National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice until being compelled by public pressure, denied the Commission's request to have President Bush and Vice-President Cheney testify publicly under oath, and only reluctantly and belatedly turned over documents that the Commission needed to do its job – the members of the Commission were able to produce a comprehensive assessment of how the hijackers capitalized on security weaknesses and poor intelligence coordination to perpetrate the devastating, unprecedented attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The recommendations that the Commission has produced should serve as an important roadmap for reform of our intelligence-gathering agencies, Congressional oversight of the Department of Homeland Security and other key policies that guide our strategies to prevent, thwart and respond to terrorist attacks against the United States.

There are several Commission findings and recommendations that deserve special attention. Today's report confirms, once again, that Bush Administration claims about ties between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein were overblown and exaggerated. Despite the Bush Administration's coordinated campaign to convince the American people of Saddam Hussein's cooperation with Al Qaeda, the Commission has laid to rest this false premise for the war in Iraq.

Now that 900 American service men and women have been killed in the Iraq war – which the Bush Administration justified as a counter-attack against Al Qaeda – the 9/11 Commission reports that Iran – not Iraq – was an Al Qaeda enabler that assisted some of the hijackers on their way to the United States to carry out their deadly plans. While U.S. inspectors continue to scour the sands of Iraq in vain, searching for weapons of mass destruction, Iran's nuclear weapons program continues to progress unabated and the 9/11 Commission has debunked the Saddam-bin Laden link.

I strongly support the Commission's recommendation that a permanent Homeland Security Committee is needed in Congress to oversee the Department's activities. Since March 2003, I have served as a senior member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, which was created to provide this urgently needed oversight. Unless renewed by Republican leaders in Congress, the committee's term will expire at the end of this year. While a permanent panel is needed, it is especially ironic and troubling that – on the very same day that the 9/11 Commission has pointed out serious gaps in our

homeland defenses exploited by the 9/11 hijackers - the Republican-controlled Select Committee on Homeland Security has once again postponed action on a homeland security bill in an attempt to avoid consideration of Democratic amendments that would fix serious security loopholes: lax chemical plant security; the failure to inspect cargo that is carried on passenger planes; and the lack of counter-terror training for flight attendants, who would have to be “in-flight first responders” in the event of another terrorist attempt to take over an aircraft.

The families of the 9/11 victims have expressed their wish that the Commission’s recommendations not gather dust on the shelf. They need to know that the Select Committee’s authorization bill for the Department of Homeland Security has been sent to the dustbin by Republicans looking to sweep the need for badly-needed reforms under the rug.

We in Massachusetts will be forever tragically linked to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as American Airlines Flight 11 and United Flight 175 took off from Logan Airport before being crashed into the World Trade Center towers. Many lost friends and loved ones on that horrible day. In tribute to all of the victims and their families, we must take immediate action to close the dangerous aviation security loopholes that we know still exist.

Today’s report should remind us of the need to re-dedicate ourselves to the vital mission of closing the cargo loophole – which permits cargo to be loaded on passenger planes without being physically screened – and providing flight attendants with the counter-terror training that they need to stop attackers trying to take over the airplane. The painful legacy of 9/11 should not be further compounded by failure in Congress to take real action to close security loopholes identified since the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks.